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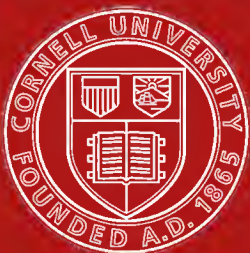
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THE SUBJECTION OF HAMLET.

THE
SUBJECTION OF HAMLET:

AN ESSAY

TOWARD AN EXPLANATION OF THE MOTIVES OF THOUGHT AND
ACTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S

PRINCE OF DENMARK.

BY

WILLIAM LEIGHTON,

AUTHOR OF "SHAKESPEARE'S DREAM," "THE SONS OF GODWIN," "CHANGE," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

JOSEPH CROSBY, Hon. M.R.S.L.

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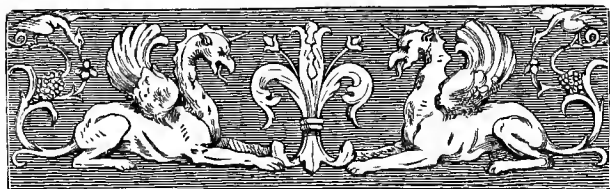
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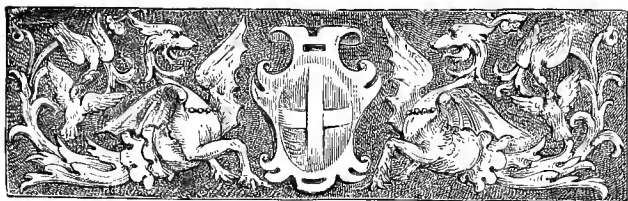
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H A M L E T.

Beneath thy "inky cloak" what mystery,
Hidden yet half unfolded, cheats our eyes?
What brooding thought in thy sad bosom lies,
To stain young life with deep-dyed melancholy?
Still by thy side stalks grim-eyed tragedy,
While superstitious terrors darkly rise—
Wringing our hearts with painful sympathies—
And push thee to thy fatal destiny.
Thou can'st not hide the struggle in thy breast:
Like doomed Laocoon's within the folds
Of deadly serpents, must thy sufferings be—
In vain thy heart of mystery : Nature holds
Such enmity to madness, 'tis confessed
That monster is the foe that tortures thee.





INTRODUCTION.

TWO centuries elapsed after the death of the Great Master of the English drama before the critics discovered that he was something more than a mere writer of plays. Coleridge in England, and Goethe in Germany, turning upon Shakespeare the focus of metaphysical analysis, were the first to lift him out of the domain of the playwright and artist, and to exalt him to a transcendent position among mental philosophers and mental pathologists. And the chief, grand, and unique production of his, on which they exercised their genius, and from which they drew their illustrations, was the tragedy of *Hamlet*; a production upon which more thought has been bestowed, and more volumes written, than upon any other secular work in the language. And yet how contradictory in theory, and unsatisfactory in results, have been all these speculations! Some half a dozen years

ago, Karl Werder, of Germany, promulgated his original and fascinating theory of the character of Hamlet; one so different from anything heretofore conceived of the prince, and one developed with such plausible ingenuity and force of illustration, that it startled for a while the world of thinkers; and men began to believe that they had, at last, found a solid basis of fact on which to account for the puzzling motives and actions of the character. Instead of being a doubter in thought, and a procrastinator in deed, we were told that Hamlet was a quick-witted and self-reliant man of business, taking advantage of every opportunity to execute his plans of revenge according to his oath, and failing of success only because he was hampered by surrounding circumstances. Bravely and skilfully he attempted to navigate his ship over a tempestuous ocean that must be crossed. He exerted every nerve, tacked and veered as he best could, and lightened his hold by sacrificing every encumbrance; but he was wrecked at last upon rocks that no pilot could avoid, amid storms that no vessel could withstand. The ghost laid upon him the duty of avenging his murder. Merely to have plunged his sword into the king would have been a comparatively easy task; but what, then, would have been his own position? How would the act appear to the court and the people of Denmark? Thoroughly satisfied though he might be that it was "an honest ghost" he had seen, he had nevertheless no power to

bring the apparition into court and make it testify to the facts. He would simply have stood in the light of a cowardly and cold-blooded murderer, who had despatched his sovereign through private malice for cutting him out of the succession. It became, therefore, his task to so conduct himself as to inveigle the king into some overt act or confession; for outside the king's own breast there existed no living, tangible proof of the murder. Could any circumstances be imagined more trying to bear, or more difficult to overcome, than those in which the young and brilliant, the determined and dutiful, the self-sacrificing but ill-starred prince was placed? He did all in his power, all within human power, that could be done; but the fates were against him. Such was Werder's conception of Hamlet, and not a few judicious critics accepted it; but a more careful attention to the text, and a more accurate analysis of motive, procedure, and soliloquy, revealed its weakness. It would fit occasionally, but not *always*; it seemed to be a key that would unlock some of the cells, but failed to open *all* the avenues of the mystery; it disappointed quite as often as it satisfied; and so, of late years, most thinkers have come back to the old and celebrated theories of Coleridge and Goethe and Schlegel. It is unnecessary, even did space allow, here to recapitulate them. They may be briefly stated as exhibiting the character of Hamlet on the ground of a functionally defective or unbalanced organization; his

✓ brain was unable to bear the strain put upon it; his intellectual activities were too great for his physical powers, and the surplusage, invading the judgment, became the chief agency in overwhelming and wrecking his splendid abilities.

Let us here stop for a moment, and ask ourselves why it is there should be such a variety of theories respecting the idiosyncrasy of this one character? Why is it that we scarcely find any two critics agree in its delineation? or even any one critic agree with himself for a long time together? Some one has remarked that "Germany is Hamlet;" may we not rather say that *humanity* is Hamlet? not one man's, but all men's humanity. And, as in looking into a mirror, we each see our own face, and not those of our neighbors; and as our features differ from those of others, so they at different times differ from themselves; thus it may be with regard to Hamlet; and this is why the drama is so fascinating, both in the closet and on the stage. We measure Hamlet by ourselves. No one who reads or sees the play with any degree of enthusiasm or appreciation, but has at some time been a Hamlet to himself. Every one has at some time been troubled with the same restless longings of the soul, and the same trials of the affections, that make up the sum of the sufferings of the Prince of Denmark. It is in this wonderful art of combining the concrete with the abstract, of giving us each a portrait of ourselves, and at

the same time of making every character "not one but all mankind's epitome," that the great Art-Master's amazing genius, observation, and insight are particularly displayed.

In the following essay, the result of long and patient thought, Mr. Leighton claims to have discovered the master-key that opens, with all but infallible success, the very heart of Hamlet's mystery. The question, Was Hamlet insane? Mr. Leighton proceeds to solve on the hypothesis of a phase of mental pathology that has never, I believe, been heretofore advanced. His confidence in his hypothesis is great, and yet not more so, I venture to say, than he has clearly and ably supported. He seems to say, with Fabian in *Twelfth Night*,—

"*Fab.* I will prove it legitimate, Sir, upon the oaths of judgment and reason.

Sir Toby. And they have been grand-jurymen since before Noah was a sailor."

When I first read this essay, I confess I was surprised at the aptitude with which Mr. Leighton's hypothesis harmonized and dovetailed together the seeming contradictions of motive and action that have made the character such a perplexing study. I re-read the whole play with the sole object in view of testing its validity; and the more I studied it, the more it grew upon me. I must not anticipate the reader by stating this hypothesis. Its

simplicity makes it surprising that it has not been enunciated before. In a recent article, "On the Uses of Shakespeare off the Stage" (*Harpers' Monthly*, August, 1882), the writer says,—

"If we analyze Hamlet's amazing power of association, we see its roots in his impressionable temperament, while its gigantic trunk and branches appear in the sudden arrest of his quiet and intellectually luxurious life at the University, in his intensely painful and bewildering attitude on his return to Elsinore, and *in his utter incapacity*—such being the excessive productiveness of his imagination—to keep an idea sufficiently long in contact with reason and judgment to actualize it by the firm decision of his will." This is very good, so far as it goes; but the writer fails of success by not pushing the idea to that point of mental unsoundness which Mr. Leighton has hit upon, and which, alone, seems to elucidate the true nature of Hamlet's idiosyncrasy. This presupposes an unthought-of type of intellectual weakness, more influential, as well as more common, than is generally supposed; and it may very probably be that the poet took both the design and coloring of his portrait from nature.

The mode Mr. Leighton has taken in solving the problem of Hamlet's insanity, or otherwise, is through the question, How far has the poet permitted us to know the character *subjectively*? That his new conception of

it is perfect, or that it will satisfy all admirers of this noble tragedy, is, I think, very doubtful; probably more than the author himself expects. Influenced by past experience, I dare not personally say that here is a final settlement of the question, and that further study of the character would be superfluous. But whatever may be thought of the solution here proposed, no one can deny that the author has thrown much additional light upon the subject, and has illustrated it by an exhaustive analysis of Hamlet that is every way interesting. The growth of Shakespeare societies, and of the literature which both in America and Europe is ever swelling around the works of our poet, is sufficient proof of the interest that is felt in them; and every help towards a better understanding of them deserves our sincere gratitude. Mr. Leighton has done more than write a clever and speculative essay. He has cleared away many of the difficulties, and opened up a new psychological prospect from which to view and study one of the profoundest characters ever portrayed in dramatic literature; and in conclusion I will only express the hope that his masterly and modest production may reach the hands of numerous lovers of Hamlet and of Shakespeare, who will find in it as great satisfaction and pleasure as it has given to

His obedient friend and servant,

JOSEPH CROSBY.

ZANESVILLE, OHIO, August 19, 1882.



THE SUBJECTION OF HAMLET.

“A pipe for Fortune’s finger
To sound what stop she please.”



THE character of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, as portrayed by Shakespeare, has been before the world for nearly three hundred years. On account of the interest pertaining to it, and the remarkable tragedy of which this melancholy prince is the central figure, more has been thought, said, and written of it, than of that of any other imaginary dramatic personage. Though the learned minds of deep and acute thinkers have been engaged in this consideration, and a great literature has accumulated on the subject, the problem of Hamlet’s mental condition remains to perplex the reader of to-day; who, in the diversity of opinions, is generally forced to rely on his own impressions produced by reading the play or seeing

it acted. The problem is the more interesting that it occurs in a tragedy, which, with a few other plays by the same author, undoubtedly holds the highest place in dramatic literature; and that the character of Hamlet engages our sympathies, and provokes curiosity perhaps beyond any other in the long list of dramatic heroes. His is a pathetic story, and a supernatural light shines upon him from the spectral figure that appears in the "nipping and eager air" upon that platform at Elsinore, where

"The majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march."

✓ Hamlet's mind is endowed with some of the richest gifts the greatest of poets could bestow. His conversation exhibits flashes of the most brilliant wit, charming imaginations and fancies that crown him with a poetical halo, subtilties of thought which delight and astonish us, while the dignity and grace of his language compel admiration, even when judgment disapproves of his course of action. Yet, with all this brilliance, he fails to act in any definite line of consistent purpose; neglects what he deems a sacred duty; wastes himself in trifling occupations; descends to the ignoble part of a court-jester; breaks the heart of a lady he dearly loves; uselessly and recklessly kills her father, with no sign of sorrow or remorse for the deed; insults a brother's legitimate grief

at her grave; and finally goes stumbling to the catastrophe of his death, the most complete failure, in the direction of the avowed purpose of his life, ever recorded. To endeavor to understand why this is so, and exactly what Shakespeare meant by this enigmatical prince are the objects of the present inquiry. It is not proposed to cite the opinions of the world's thinkers upon Hamlet's mental condition,—this has already been done extensively and elaborately; and those wishing to review such opinions are referred to the second volume of Mr. Furness' admirable edition of the play,—but to present the character of the prince as it presents itself to a reader; to mark certain peculiarities as they appear, and from them try to find a key to his action and a means of unfolding "the heart of his mystery."

The original story of Hamlet, written by Saxo Grammaticus early in the thirteenth century, only became known in an English version, and adapted to the stage near the end of the sixteenth century. As it first appeared in English dress, it was either a translation out of the collection of Belleforest, a French writer, who probably copied from Bandello, an Italian novelist, or a play founded on the story as told by Belleforest or Bandello. Mr. Collier, in his introduction to *The Hystorie of Hamblet*, states, "The only known copy of this novel is preserved among Capell's books at Cambridge, and bears date in 1608, but there can be little

doubt that it had originally come from the press considerably before the commencement of the seventeenth century. That a play upon the story of Hamlet had been written some years before 1590 we have every reason to believe. On the 9th of June, 1594, Henslowe registers in his diary, preserved at Dulwich College, that *Hamlet* was performed by his company while acting at Newington Butts, apparently in conjunction with the association to which Shakespeare belonged; it was then an old play, and produced him only eight shillings as his share of the receipts, though, when new pieces were represented, his proportion at the same period was usually more than three pounds. Malone confidently, though conjecturally, assigned the *Hamlet* mentioned by Henslowe to Thomas Kyd; it is often alluded to by contemporaries, and there is not a moment's doubt that it was written and acted many years before Shakespeare's tragedy of the same name was produced."* Mr. Richard Grant White is confident that portions of this early *Hamlet* appear in the Quarto of Shakespeare's play printed in 1603, where the actor, who furnished the printer from an unreliable memory, had to be pieced out with the older play.

How much of this old play Shakespeare (writing

* Shakespeare's Library: edited by William Hazlitt, vol. ii, part i, pages 213 and 214.

sometime between 1600—not earlier, the best authorities agree—and July 26, 1602, when this play was entered in the Stationers' register) adopted may never be known, nor what hint, if any, it afforded him to his conception of the character of his chief personage.

The Hamlet of the *Hystorie* is utterly unlike Shakespeare's hero. In that old story the Prince of Denmark plays mad in the most unequivocal manner: "Hee rent and tore his clothes, wallowing and lying in the durt and mire, his face all filthy and blacke, running through the streets like a man distraught, not speaking one worde, but such as seemed to proceede from madnesse and mere frenzie, all his actions and jestures beeing no other then the right countenances of a man wholly deprived of all reason and understanding; in such sort, that as then hee seemed fitte for nothing, but to make sport to the pages and ruffling courtiers, that attended in the court of his uncle and father-in-law."* Counterfeiting insanity in this coarse manner, there is no hint that his brain was really diseased; indeed his strength of intellect, will, and general capacity are highly commended. Except in certain of the circumstances in which he is placed, he is not like Shakespeare's Hamlet; therefore his rude characterization in the story affords no safe clue to the

* Shakespeare's Library: edited by William Hazlitt, vol. ii, part i, page 231.

solution of the question we seek to answer. As no help to a proper understanding of Hamlet can be obtained from these originals, let us proceed to his delineation by Shakespeare.

— A more difficult position can hardly be imagined than that in which the Prince of Denmark is placed. He seems to have been in complete dependence upon the will of his uncle, with no estate, power, following, or influence of his own. The king describes his place,—

“Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.”

— The king's pronoun, “our,” plainly indicates his nephew's absolute subjection. While brooding over the disgrace of his mother's too-hasty marriage, and feeling an instinctive distrust of her new husband, the startling disclosure of the ghost comes to fill him with horror and dread of the cruel duty of revenge imposed upon him,—a filial duty, yet one he cannot proclaim to the world without better proof of his uncle's guilt than his own relation of the words of the ghost. If he should act promptly, and kill the king, what account of his deed can he give to the court and the people? The story of the ghost? When has a ghost story, with no corroboratory proof, been held a good excuse for killing a king? This will not do. Then there is the horrid doubt of the authenticity of the ghost,—

“ The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil : and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape ; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me.”

It is evident that he must not proceed too hastily ; the circumstances of his father's death are to be made plain to the world by other means than the ghost story ; then, and not until then, Hamlet can proceed to direct retribution ; for the right of a son to avenge a father's death upon his murderer was not only accorded, but the act demanded by the code of morality held by the Scandinavian people of old Denmark.

To show proof of the guilt of King Claudius might be a difficult task ; but it is one that should be possible to the brilliant intellect of Hamlet. We may fairly expect of his mental superiority over the king and all the court, that he will proceed with carefully weighed and matured plans to direct success ; make plain the murderer's guilt ; overwhelm him with just retribution ; and, as the crown of his undertaking, place himself on Denmark's throne. But this is what Hamlet does not do. He makes no plans worthy of the name. It is true that, by a dramatic representation of his father's murder, he entraps his guilty uncle into a confusion that confirms the ghost's story to his own mind, and perhaps to that of Horatio ; but there are no other prepared witnesses, as

there might have been; and the only practical result of this "mouse-trap" is to make the king aware that his nephew knows the damning history of his guilt, and to set in motion more careful and dangerous plots against that nephew's life.

This failure to accomplish, in any satisfactory way, the mission so solemnly and preternaturally assigned to him has been explained in various ways. He has been declared mad, and not mad; he has been deemed destitute of the nerve to act; he has been called a procrastinator, a trifler with the awful issues placed in his hands. Goethe pictures him as "an oak tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces,—a beautiful, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinking beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off."* These poetical pictures by the great German poet have been often adopted, and other notable thinkers have modified them in various way; while others have found objections to such belief.

✓ Hamlet meets the ghost's first suggestion of revenge with an alacrity that argues no lack of nerve,—

* New Variorum Shakespeare: edited by H. H. Furness, vol. iv, page 273.

“Haste me to know’t, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.”

And when the ghost has disappeared, the prince’s soliloquy breathes the most determined nerve and resolution ; there is not a word or phrase that betrays the least indication of wavering. When joined by his friends, his language has lost its violence, and is flighty ; but, considered as the expression of a sane mind, surely that of a man who has the nerve to do what he proposes. A heart and hand incapable, through fear, tenderness, or repugnance to violence, of carrying into execution the intents of the mind, constitute the conditions which are understood as lack of nerve. Hamlet’s words are always fearless ; so, too, are his acts. In his mother’s chamber he both speaks and acts with nervous promptitude. In the sea-fight, the church-yard, the fencing match, he shows that he has the nerve to act. But he does not act with any effective force in the direction of his mission ; and hence it has been claimed that he is without the nerve to do so ; but there may be another reason : A MIND THAT CANNOT HOLD TO ONE INTENT would be a sufficient reason. If he has not so much command of his own will as to be able to keep a predetermined purpose in view through all the circumstances of his surroundings, in every interview with the people of the court, his mother, and the king, but is influenced and controlled by any prevailing disposition,

any idiosyncrasy unconnected with his mission, his mind lacks the governing power of judgment, and this lack is to be insane, unsound; for the worst forms of insanity are the working of mental faculties without judgment.

Is not this lack of continuous governing power Hamlet's condition? He extricates himself from the hands of the king's servants, who are conveying him to England, with a prompt decision that shows abundance of nerve, taking advantage of circumstances as none but a man of nervous force could do, and accomplishing his little plot with plenty of daring and cunning, but following no plans except the momentary ones that call for immediate execution. Throughout the play he is constantly acting with nervous alacrity according to the dictates of a wonderfully keen but eccentric intellect; yet we do not find a consistency in his actions indicating a decided line of conduct, nor any leading up to a design for the accomplishment of the duty to which he has vowed his life. He is constantly falling into entanglements which come of circumstances, generally the influence of other minds. In spite of his brilliant intellect, which dazzles and overawes all with whom he comes in contact, and which always charms an audience, we are, during the play, and long before its conclusion, made aware that he is not the man to accomplish the duty to which he has been called, and which he has zealously undertaken. While we are thus disappointed in him, we do not lose either interest or

admiration, but are drawn to him by a strange sympathy, and filled with a magnetic pathos that flows from him,—a pathos which, as a sane being, he does not always deserve, and which, upon reflection, we do not find worthily bestowed on such a cowardly and unfeeling plotter as a sane Hamlet would be.


If it be claimed that upon the real or feigned insanity of Hamlet so much has been written, and both sides of the question had such ardent advocates, that this question has been sufficiently discussed, and by such able thinkers, that what they have failed to develop has little chance of being elucidated, yet, we must remember, that it is just this problem that meets every student of English literature when he comes to the consideration of a play justly declared a masterpiece of the language; for Hamlet's psychological condition is the key of the drama, and the reader must, perforce, examine it for himself, however much it has been previously discussed. If he consults authorities for the solution of his doubts, he will find the question not plainly determined for him, as able arguments and famous names are ranged on both sides.

In the *Hystorie* the hero pretends madness after the manner of that Roman Brutus who counterfeited a fool; but, because this is so in the original story, it by no means follows that Shakespeare intended his hero to play the madman, for it is observable, as before mentioned, that, in the methods of their conduct, the two Hamlets are

very different. There is no agreement between Shakespeare's graceful and intellectual prince and the hero of the *Hystorie*. As the conduct is different, so may the cause be; for it is very easy to understand how the great dramatist may have preferred to give his Hamlet a real infirmity rather than present him in the part of a cheat, whose counterfeiting, however difficult his position, has in it something of the nature of cowardice, a quality very detrimental to a hero. If it be said, as it has been, that a crazy hero makes "the whole play a chaos," and deprives it of tragic interest, or that Hamlet's broad and acute intellect precludes the thought of insanity, it may be shown that both of these positions can be disputed.

Is it not probable that a doubt of Hamlet's sanity increases the mystery of his movements, making us watch more intently his words and actions? Does not his flightiness, alternating with exhibitions of the most brilliant intellectual power, give him an added interest in our eyes, the interest of uncertainty? If we believe in his clear, unhesitating judgment, we know that he has a protecting power in the strength of his brain to avert all the dangers that threaten him; but, on the other hand, how perilous and uncertain is his position, if, urged by noble intents towards great deeds, he goes onward with no safe guide of judgment, like a rudderless ship in a dangerous sea, where the curl and break of each wave may be on the sharp point of a destroying

rock, and no controlling power to avoid the wreck! If it can be shown that "a constant principle" governs all his changes and makes a perfect key of his conduct, will not the discovery of this "principle" conserve the unity of action essential to tragedy, and preserve and make deserving that pathos which a writer claims Hamlet's insanity would destroy?

 In answer to the other objection, that Hamlet's high faculties of intellect of themselves disprove insanity, it will be found that the reverse of this is true. It is a fact often presented in the world's history, and doubtless well known to Shakespeare, that those who have accomplished the highest and most brilliant mental efforts have sometimes been marked by eccentricities bordering on insanity, and, in some cases, actually merging in it. It is not necessary to prove this by quoting the long list of illustrious madmen; one instance will suffice: Torquato Tasso, Shakespeare's contemporary, was an unhappy madman, and many fine passages of his great epic were, doubtless, written in a maniac's cell, where he is said to have composed much of his famous poem. His death occurred only five or six years before the tragedy of *Hamlet* was written, and, from his unfortunate mental condition, Shakespeare may have had the hint that shaped the characterization of his crazy prince. So long ago as the time of Aristotle, the insanity of genius had been observed, for "Nullum magnum ingenium sine

mixtura dementiæ” has been quoted as coming originally from that wise old Greek.

Simple *melancholia*, without delusion, is classed among the forms of insanity; and, indeed, a great majority of cases of insanity commence with a state of emotional perversion of a depressing and sorrowful character. I quote from a medical work the description of certain symptoms of the *melancholia* of insanity: “The patient’s feeling of external objects and events is perverted, so that he complains of being strangely and unnaturally changed; impressions which should rightly be agreeable, or only indifferent, are felt as painful.”* If this condition be compared with Hamlet’s account of himself, II, 2, the descriptions will be found very similar, almost identical: “I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises; and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire,—why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.”

That Hamlet was afflicted with *melancholia*, before the disclosures of the ghost gave him any possible reason for covering his acts with the pretence of madness, is suffi-

* Reynolds’ System of Medicine, vol. i, page 592.

ciently obvious from the words of the king and queen, and his own soliloquy, I, 2. It will scarcely be claimed that Hamlet plays *melancholia*, as a preliminary stage of madness; for such refinement of acting would be "caviare to the general," little likely to be appreciated by his audience of the Danish court, who must have been altogether incapable of being impressed by such subtilities, and on whom this finesse would have been utterly thrown away.

In Hamlet occur the following conditions: a mind unnaturally brilliant, and of that character commonly associated with eccentricities of thought and habit, and peculiarly liable to the disease of insanity; a deep sorrow, the death of his father; a disappointment in his uncle's advancement to the regal power of Denmark instead of his own; a feeling of dishonor in his mother's hasty marriage,—all pressing disturbingly upon his thoughts; and an oppression of melancholy exactly that which, in nine cases out of ten, precedes and accompanies attacks of insanity. Thus constituted and affected, he sees the ghost of his father under circumstances of peculiar horror; listens to a dreadful story of fratricide, and is commanded by his unearthly visitant

"Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,"

to avenge the murder of his father upon his uncle

father-in-law. With such an accumulation of conditions, excitements, horrors, and griefs in, a nervous, delicate, sensitive organization and a highly imaginative brain, what result might be expected? even more than *melancholia*: insanity. And this is what actually occurred. Although the great poet has covered the forms of Hamlet's lunacy with the flashings of his wit and eloquence, the power and pathos of his thoughts; yet, nevertheless, he has depicted them with wonderful accuracy. It would have been a phlegmatic Dane, indeed, that could have kept an even mind in Hamlet's place; not such a being as Shakespeare has drawn,—a being thrilled with fanciful imaginings; with intense yearnings toward the beautiful, the noble, and the true; with the most chivalrous sense of honor; with womanly tenderness; with divine aspirations. Upon such a nature, the philosopher of mind knew well that the conditions he imposed would disturb the balance of intellect; and none but he could have delineated, in so masterly a manner, the aberrations of the mind which he thus forced into the weird regions of insanity.


When a person is suspected of insanity he is watched, and all his words and actions examined to note if they indicate any form of the suspected disease, any peculiar aberration of mind or prevailing idiosyncrasy. Let us do so with Hamlet, and note how he bears such scrutiny.

King. But now, my Cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

Hamlet. A little more than kin, and less than kind!

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Hamlet. Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun."



The first utterance of Hamlet is marked as "an aside" by modern editors, and usually so rendered by actors. In the Folios and Quarto of 1604 there is nothing to indicate that such was the intention of the author,—Warburton being the first to so print it. It seems unnecessary there should be soliloquy here to hint what is soon to be plainly expressed, viz., Hamlet's distrust of his uncle. The hint, too, would be likely to be lost on an audience hearing the play for the first time, because of its ambiguity; but the remark is of that disrespectful, suggestive kind which the prince is in the habit of making to the king. Hence there would appear to be no sufficient reason for Warburton's innovation, as the line has more force and keener meaning if spoken *to* the king. The king's words refer to the relationship between himself and Hamlet, but they fall from his lips in such inquiring manner as if he would put a probe into the thoughts of his nephew, whose melancholy condition excites his distrust. The response is instant, and the probe pushed back into the mind of the king. Hamlet reads his uncle's suspicion, that a harsh opinion of his overhasty marriage and of his unfavorable inclination toward his nephew, with, perhaps, even darker doubts,

are causes of that nephew's brooding sadness; and he reflects the suspicion, retorting what he reads, in words of biting, but subtile meaning. This first encounter of words is like the flash in the eyes of two who would quarrel, a clearer revelation of feeling to them than the plainest words could express; but it is Hamlet who is imprudent in this revelation: it does not help him, and puts his opponent on guard. On the king's part, any intimation of suspicion of or unfavorable intent toward

"My Cousin Hamlet, and my son,"

so long as that intent is apparent to its object alone, is no imprudence; for his careful words cannot be construed against him by queen, court, or people, even if any caution is necessary; but there seems to be no such need, as he is clothed with power, and the prince has none. So Hamlet's

"A little more than kin, and less than kind!"

refers to the king, and not to himself; and is spoken in an exclamatory, scornful way, without a purpose; being apparently struck out of his mind by the collision of thought meeting thought, as flint and steel strike fire. Without giving any recognition of his nephew's words, the king goes on very calmly with his interrupted question,—

"How is it that the clouds still hang on you?"

In the reply of the prince, reference to the questioner's thoughts again comes back to him, while at the same time the words seem in literal answer to his question,—

“Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.”

Here the meaning is evident: the courtly reference to enjoyment of the sun's rays, that beam from the face of royalty, is a reflection of the feeling of the gay throng that surrounds the throne; but another meaning reaches the uncle: this is a new presentation of the guilty knowledge in the king's breast, that the sunlight of festivities of marriage with his brother's widow is unbecoming to him, to the queen, to Hamlet, to “the majesty of buried Denmark,”—even if he loses the reproach of the final pun,—

“too much i' the *son*.”

The king has spoken; but elicited no satisfactory answer. To all but himself—and possibly the queen—Hamlet's words show a profound melancholy; but the king sees in them a reckless defiance,—perhaps madness. They have given him food for thought, and he pauses to digest it, feeling himself dazzled by the intellectual brilliance and subtilty of his son-in-law, and inclined to examine the premises carefully before proceeding, though conscious that he is in no danger, and has committed

no imprudence, unless permitting the prince to read his thoughts may be so deemed.

The queen now speaks,—

“Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not forever, with thy veiled lids,
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know’st ’tis common: all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Hamlet. Ay, madam; it is common.

Queen. If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee?

Hamlet. ‘Seems,’ madam? nay, it is; I know not ‘seems.’
’Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected ’havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly: these indeed ‘seem’;
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.”

Hamlet’s first reply to his mother is simply assent, as if his mind were more engaged by her thoughts than in framing a reply; but when she gives him a word that suggests an answer, he immediately repeats her word, turning against her, in the most powerful and exquisitely subtile manner, the reproach she intends. The queen’s question, interpreted into directness, is, Why does your grief seem more than mine, when I have the same cause

for sorrow as yourself, but give mine no such uncommon and unnecessary particularity? As Hamlet has reflected what he found in the thoughts of the king, so, also, he reflects the queen's; and with a subtilty of language even more delicate than before, inasmuch as his reply to the queen has an outward seeming of respect, almost of affection. To all the court, except the king and queen, he is simply emphasizing his sorrow; but his mother finds in his words a keen reproach upon her vain professions of sorrow, which she perceives he knows to be hypocritical, by his showing how easily such seeming can be simulated; her own guilty thoughts making the application of the reproach to her condemning soul. She is silenced, and cannot utter another word until the king, coming to her rescue with a long speech, turns to her that she may second his request; then, very submissively, she makes prayer to her son to comply with the royal wish: and it will be noticed that this prayer is in a different manner from her previous question.

Hamlet replies,—

“I shall, in all my best, obey you, madam.”

This time, as the queen's words indicate only motherly interest, her son's reply is simply obedient. The king again addresses his nephew; but receiving no answer, speaks a few lines to the queen; and then all go out except

Hamlet, who remains to soliloquize. He wishes he were dead, that suicide were not contrary to God's ordinance,—common wishes of madmen,—and expresses profound disgust of the world and life,—usual symptoms and expressions of *melancholia*. Then he reflects upon his mother's hasty marriage, the inferiority of his uncle to his father, the loving kindness of his father to his mother, her responsiveness to that love; and so working himself into the violence of passion, rails against this second marriage which he terms incestuous—a term not really applicable to such a marriage, which was not only in accordance with law, but considered eminently proper. But Hamlet's train of thought is evidently suggested by what he has just read in the minds of the king and queen; it is their effect on him. The king's consciousness of guilt, and the queen's of, at least, fault, bring to the prince this violent and unreasoning condemnation that gives the only fault he yet knows of them,—and this not a fault in the common estimation of Denmark,—the worst of names. But his violence is soon exhausted, and he falls again into his gloom and melancholy, with the despairing thought,—

“But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue!”

Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo enter and respectfully greet the Prince of Denmark, who receives them with cordiality, and converses cheerfully with Horatio,

appearing to catch from his brother-student the frank spirit of fellowship, which springs from sympathies and recollections that come of their relationship at the University and student friendship, and which at once appeals to him in his friend's greeting; thus for the moment giving direction to and engrossing his mind. No trace of his late thoughts or melancholy appears until Horatio refers to his father; but when that friend relates how an apparition of the late king haunts "the platform" where Marcellus and Bernardo hold their watch, he is eagerly interested in the strange story they tell, questions all of them concerning the details of the visitation, and is much moved by their recital. As his thoughts lately drew their color from what he found in the hearts and thoughts of the king and queen, he now absorbs immediately the interest which his friends feel in the affair of the ghost. This appears entirely natural, as the circumstances appeal so peculiarly to him as to hide his idiosyncrasy. He concludes this interview by requesting his friends—for exactly what reason he does not explain—not to make known what they have seen, and by making an appointment to watch with them for the reappearance of the ghost, which he declares, with no lack of courage, he will address,—

"Though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace."

His visitors gone, Hamlet soliloquizes in four lines concerning the ghost, which now—being the latest excitement—holds his thoughts completely. In this excitement his melancholy has dissolved, nor does it reappear until the affair of the ghost is over.

Hamlet next appears upon “the platform” with Horatio and Marcellus in their watch. They hear the flourish of trumpets and firing of cannon that sound for the king’s revels. The prince becomes, in accordance with his usual habit, deeply interested in the theme which these sounds suggest, and dismisses for the time all thought of the ghost he has come to interview, as he eagerly enters into the consideration of his uncle’s habits and the national fault, concerning which he expresses very fully his unfavorable opinion. But the entrance of the ghost instantly diverts his thoughts and powerfully impresses his mind: from which time until the final disappearance of the spectre he is entirely occupied with this supernatural visitant and the story it tells. This visitation is so wonderful, and the ghost’s story so interesting, that we feel no surprise that Hamlet should absorb from it all its grim horror, and readily fall into agreement with the spectre as to the mission it “unfolds”: but still, in so doing, the prince is following a habit which has become a disease of his mind: that of HAVING HIS THOUGHTS CAPTURED BY WHOEVER SPEAKS TO HIM, OR BY THE LAST EXCITING CIRCUMSTANCE, TO THE EX-

CLUSION OR CONFUSION OF ALL THE PREVIOUS DETERMINATIONS OF HIS WILL.

The ghost gone, the prince, wrought to much passionate excitement, swears, in a violent soliloquy, to perform its requirements, and to devote his life singly to the mission thus impressively laid upon him by the shadow of his father. Horatio and Marcellus are naturally curious to learn what has been revealed; for the interview has been private between the prince and the spectre; and they urge Hamlet to tell them about it. But a strange hysteria has seized the disturbed Prince of Denmark; his words are "wild and whirling," and the awful influence of the spectre, with some entanglement of his mind by his companions' curiosity and the dramatic subterranean movements of the ghost, which Horatio declares to be "wondrous strange," combine to make his words and actions unintelligible to his friends, and a puzzle to the reader who has not found a key to his mysterious conduct. He speaks to his father's spirit in tones and phrases of mockery and irreverence, and to the questioning of his companions returns only quizzical banter. This mental condition is not natural to a sane mind that has just been confronted with such solemn circumstances, and assigned so grave a duty; but it is, doubtless, the condition an unsound mind might assume, when pushed over into the realm of unreason by the excitement of seeing a

ghost and being so wrought on, as was Hamlet, by the phantom's horrid story.

The appearance, to several persons, of the ghost of the dead king is a circumstance so extraordinary as to excite the suspicion that Shakespeare was led into a fault by too close adherence to that early play of *Hamlet*, which has already been mentioned. He was probably tempted to this by the inducements which existed to use an objective ghost. The tone of solemn terror it imparts, the popularity of genuine ghost stories, the interest sure to come with its introduction, the scenic effect,—these are undoubtedly valuable to a play; and hence were held in proper estimation by so skilful a playwright as Shakespeare. But in no other case has he yielded to this temptation; elsewhere his ghosts are subjective, dreams or hallucinations; the later appearance of the ghost in this play being of such character. Hence we may believe the fault of an objective ghost was not originally Shakespeare's. It might have been a favorite feature of the drama he revised,—a feature much cried up by the unreflecting crowds that thronged the play-house, gaped with many a preternatural thrill at the unearthly visitant, and drank in with eager curiosity its horrors. Shakespeare's own more cultivated judgment may have been overruled by the urgency of literary or theatrical friends, or play-house partners, who probably declared that it would never do to give

up the ghost. So a genuine ghost appears, though the author of this *rifacimento* of the old play must have felt that such popular feature was an æsthetic fault, yet a fault he dared not remove lest his play be “damned” by an arbitrary public that demanded its taste for the supernatural should be gratified by a veritable ghost. It will be noticed that, while others see it, its unfoldings are for Hamlet only: he is the especial mind upon which it is to act,—the mirror in which we more truly behold and measure it than we can by its objective reality. As a thing, the ghost is absurd and contemptible; we know it to be a fraud, and feel that it is only fit to create a smile of derision; but, in its effect on Hamlet, this obvious impostor becomes at once clothed with dignity and majesty; it is a true element of tragic force, and we lose sight of its impossibility and absurdity. In the phenomena its appearance creates in Hamlet, its objectivity is dissolved and forgotten. In management of effects, Shakespeare has atoned as much as possible for his fault of the ghost, and concealed its absurdity by his wonderful art. If this shadow of “buried Denmark” had appeared to Hamlet only, all its effects would have been legitimate; but we would have understood that the story of the murder of the elder Hamlet, as related by the spectre, grew out of suspicions that were active in the bosom of his son; and that the latter’s melancholy imaginings, disturbed brain, and unsettled fancies had sum-

moned up this hallucination. But the fact that others see what Hamlet sees makes the ghost a veritable thing; and yet ghosts were not believed in by sensible, cultivated minds in Shakespeare's day. Hence, to build a serious, impressive play, a creation of power and beauty, on such an impossible thing as a ghost, is a conspicuous fault, and one that cannot have been an original thought of Shakespeare's, but must have come from the playwright who first dramatized the story. Shakespeare's play continually appeals to us with the force of positive truths, therefore, it should have had a more secure foundation than the story of an objective ghost.

In the first scene of Act II, occurs Ophelia's description of Hamlet in one of his mad fits. That Hamlet loved Ophelia, we have not only his word, but a tone of thought through all the scenes that give any indication of his feeling toward her, which cannot be mistaken as having any other source than love. While this is plain, his conduct to the sweet girl is so harsh and wild that it cannot be classed under any of the known phenomena of love. Feeling in his heart a fervent and sincere passion, the object of that affection would have been the last, not the first person before whom he would have exhibited tricks of counterfeited madness. The most consummate skill in acting would have been required to play a part before her, in the manner described by Ophelia; and the method of it and the thought to have

dictated it, both would have been most repugnant, and, indeed, impossible to a tender, sensitive, and honorable mind. To believe that Hamlet could have calmly premeditated, and then carried into effect, with more than an actor's art, this scene, would be lowering his dignity as a hero and as a gentleman, and giving him a coarseness and harshness of nature entirely foreign to his relation to Ophelia and the sentiment of love, and in the most positive disagreement with his nature as elsewhere shown; as, for instance, the tenderness of his expression of affection to Horatio. It would be a phase of character suitable enough for the Hamlet of the *Hystorie*, but disgusting in a hero of such exquisite sensibilities as Shakespeare has given to his hero in many scenes. The scene can be understood in this way. Conscious of an increasing infirmity of mind, Hamlet would dread its effect upon the object of his love, until much dwelling upon so sad a theme brought him to that condition which Ophelia describes. Thus he appears before her in a veritable fit of madness, not counterfeited, but induced by imagination of what disastrous results must come to his love by reason of his infirmity, and the sad termination it will bring to his heart-passion. His condition is thus brought about in exactly the same way in which he is always affected by circumstances: there is the entanglement of his mind by the thoughts that come to it, until completely absorbed and abstracted by such con-

temptation, and wrought upon by the passions of love and disappointment, he loses all restraint of reason and becomes a lunatic. Conceive a noble and tender lover afflicted with an apprehension of growing madness. In contemplation of such a misfortune, a dreadful malady thus thrust between him and his love, would not the thoughts which would then possess him be likely to increase the idiosyncrasy, we have observed in Hamlet, to more determined madness? In this way we can understand the sad scene, and it is an admirably portrayed phase of such infirmity of intellect; but how poor, how contemptible it is, if we consider it only a piece of acting!

In the mean time the king and queen are speculating upon the "transformation" of the prince. The guilty conscience of the king stimulates his suspicions; and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are sent to probe Hamlet's fevered brain. Then Polonius gives his version of Prince Hamlet's madness in prosy, but very amusing, rhetoric. He is not right that Hamlet is mad for love of his daughter; but partly right in that the love of the prince for his daughter has been the cause of mental excitement which induced paroxysms of madness. He has a clue to the truth, but not the capacity to follow it with proper prudence. The wisdom of Polonius is narrow, though his mind is filled with wise, but somewhat musty, maxims. He is, perhaps, in his dotage; for he seems to be utterly

ignorant of the terrible secret that undermines the throne of Denmark, and fills the atmosphere of its court with a fatal, moral contagion,—a secret that is weaving a tragedy about him, in the midst of which he walks, wise in his own conceit; and when at last he meets the catastrophe of his death, he dies so foolishly and uselessly that we can feel but little sorrow at his end.

Hamlet enters, and plays at words with the garrulous old councillor. He is often considered, at this time, as playing crazy, and enjoying such frivolous employment; but it seems more probable that, perceiving the prying, questioning manner of Polonius, and divining instantly his desire to penetrate “the heart of his mystery,” he reflects, as usual, the cunning of his questioner; and is thus rather acted upon than acting. Caught by the demon always lying in wait to ensnare him, he joins to the cunning of Polonius his own subtleties of thought and adroitness of expression, which baffle and puzzle the conceited old chamberlain more and more with every sentence he utters.

Polonius. Do you know me, my lord?

Hamlet. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.”

That is, you are fishing for my secret that you may sell it to the king.

Polonius. Not I, my lord.

Hamlet. Then I would you were so honest a man.”

For what you are doing is not honest: you are trying to entrap me with words.

Polonius. Honest, my lord?

Hamlet. Ay, sir; to be honest, as the world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand."

A moral maxim exactly in the manner of Polonius, whose mind, at this moment, Hamlet is unconsciously mimicking to the utter confusion of the bewildered old man.

Polonius. That's very true, my lord.

Hamlet. For, if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion"—

That is,—Hamlet was going on to express the thought,—if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, how likely it is that the loathsome faults of dishonesty should come to the selfish and worldly hearts of men as readily as worms to a carcass, in the light of life and action, which is, like the sun, a creative god; but he suddenly breaks off in the midst of this moral sentence, which has greatly bothered the editors, to inquire,—

"Have you a daughter?

Polonius. I have, my lord.

Hamlet. Let her not walk in the sun: conception is a blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to't."

Here Hamlet refers to his former speech concerning

the sun's breeding maggots in carrion, deducing therefrom that the world may breed dishonesty in Polonius' daughter: then he puns on conception, mocking the old councillor with his "conception is a blessing," when he sees his listener has no conception of his meaning. Polonius, catching this reference to his daughter, comprehends nothing else; but, rightly enough, sets down Hamlet's subtilty to craziness, and concludes "he is far gone." Hamlet's further remarks bother Polonius still more with quips and quaintness; for the latter does not recognize his own narrow cunning, its mustiness spiced with the flavor of the prince's wit and imagination; and the sudden and bewildering turns of his whimsical companion constitute "a happiness"—Polonius wisely enough exclaims in an aside,—“that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of.” It is noticeable in this interview that Hamlet's remarks are throughout in quizzical mockery of the mind of Polonius,—that is, quaintly argumentative; and that they are all born out of his companion's mind, not his own; ~~for the mind of the chamberlain gives color and~~ ducting a “mouse-trap” for the king, ^{th. archts} ~~that personage~~ which, thus enclosing a trap for his nephew, into which, if the latter had been feigning madness, he would probably have ~~fallen, a method which is a~~ ^{madness} ~~madness~~, ^{which the king} is an arranged symptom of Hamlet's disease.

Polonius having taken his leave, the two spies, Rosen-

crantz and Guildenstern, enter; these Hamlet greets heartily as his fellow-students; but something of constraint and method in their conversation at once conveys to the subtle brain of the prince their purpose, and catches his thoughts. With his usual acute habit, he permeates their minds with the mysterious power of his own, and receives some portion of their craftiness; finds their secret, and humiliates them into confession of it; then, entangled with the theme he has absorbed from them, goes on to expatiate on his melancholy, which he explains in a magnificent prose passage, part of which has already been quoted, until his companions refer to the arrival of a company of actors. Then, as if his mind were changed in an instant, like the turning over of an hour-glass, it takes a new direction; he forgets his melancholy, on which he has been discoursing so eloquently, and his unstable brain is at once filled and involved with thoughts connected with the players. At the entrance of Polonius, who comes to announce the actors, but whose mind is, doubtless, still connecting the prince's lunacy with his daughter, Hamlet's thoughts, distracted for an instant from the actors, fly to Ophelia.

"Have you a daughter?

Polonius. I have, my lord.

Hamlet. Let her not walk in the sun: conception is a blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive. It came to pass, etc., and so on to "the pious chanson." But, from this excursion, his thoughts soon return to the players, with

whom they become completely entangled during the remainder of the act. So full is he of theatre and actors that he recites "with good accent and good discretion"—Polonius declares—a speech from one of their plays, and calls on one of the actors to continue. His mind is so excitedly interested in all this that he immediately proposes to have a play rendered in proper form. The actor's mention of the murder of King Priam has flashed into Hamlet's mind remembrance of his king-father's murder; so he mixes up his mission as an avenger with the actors, and proposes to write his father's taking-off into a play to be set before King Claudius. At the departure of the players, he bursts into soliloquy, in which his solemn promise to his father's ghost and the actors are confusedly mingled; and declares his resolve to use theatrical machinery in the construction of a trap,

"Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

While Hamlet, his mind thus filled with theatrical ideas which the actors have suggested, is intent on constructing a "mouse-trap" for the king, that personage is also contriving a trap for his nephew, into which, if the latter had been feigning madness, he would probably have fallen. This snare, suggested by Polonius, is an arranged meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia, at which the king and his councillor are to be present as eaves-droppers,

in the hope that the prince's secret will appear during the interview. This plot is carried into effect, and at its commencement Hamlet is uttering his famous soliloquy,

“To be or not to be ?—that is the question,” etc.

This is a contemplation of death as an escape from the difficulties that surround him, a common theme of insane minds. Indeed, it has been claimed that a perfectly healthy mind will never entertain the thought of self-destruction. The prince's brain was probably caught by the theme of death from dwelling on the “mouse-trap,” which was now so much in his thoughts, and which was an act of death. What conclusion he might have reached, had he followed the argument to the end, cannot be asserted, though his mind seemed dwelling principally on objections to suicide, and fortifying itself against an unreasoning tendency or insidious temptation to “shuffle off this mortal coil”; but this train of thought is interrupted by seeing Ophelia.

With his wonderful power of reading hearts and minds, Hamlet dives into poor Ophelia's thoughts; and, though his first sentences seem spoken automatically, soon discovers that she is speaking and acting a part; and is, in fact, the bait of a trap set by the king and her father. His irritable brain lights up with the fires of frenzy at this discovery, and, mingling together in con-

fusion his own insanity and her dishonesty, he lashes the bewildered girl with monstrous accusations and taunts of cruel bitterness. As his excitement grows, his language becomes startling and incoherent, until, no longer a prince or lover, he is completely controlled by his infirmity, and proceeds to unwarrantable harshness and injustice. The eaves-droppers do not know what to make of it; but the king's doubts are not set at rest, for

“Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind.”

The next scene is that of Hamlet's advice to the actors, in which he is again deeply engaged and interested in the players' art, and gives them a lecture upon acting which is, undoubtedly, in itself most reasonable and excellent, though too learned in theatrical art to come from one so inexperienced as a prince of Denmark must have been. This is one of those occasional passages where the author himself appears, and we can see, in imagination, as we read these lines of admirable instruction to players, the stage-manager, William Shakespeare, drilling his company of actors, his noble and thoughtful face lighted up by the magical fire of his genius, and his calm voice restraining undue violence, but stimulating effort, while he repeats his rules for the government of their simulated passion.

While there is no lack of orderly reason in what

Hamlet says to the players,—his mind, as usual, being drawn away from his own affairs, and, indeed, from all else, by the fascination of the circumstance of the moment,—we may yet find it difficult to understand how a sane person of Hamlet's excitable temperament, placed in his perplexing circumstances, could thus coolly discourse of the theatre and instruct the players while in such a mood of suicide and frenzy as we have seen on this eventful day.

The "mouse-trap" is about to be enacted; but before this occurs Hamlet meets Horatio, and, reading in that true friend's kind eyes and trusty words the evidences of his deep affection, proceeds—with his accustomed tendency to take color, like the chameleon, from what is nearest him—to reflect the beauty of his friend's character. His further conversation with several persons before and during the play is exceedingly flighty, though subtile and witty, and indicates a highly excited condition, due, undoubtedly, to the distraction of many cross influences; but it will be noticed that he takes tone from each speaker, and catches up with wild in-tentness each theme, while the indecency of some of his remarks may be interpreted as the effect of the corrupt morality which must, under all the circumstances of the time and the story, have pervaded the Danish court, and which, accordingly, found expression in the words of this weather-cock of a prince.

The "mouse-trap" is similar to the ghost's description of his taking off. When the player-murderer pours poison in his sleeping victim's ear, Hamlet, under the influence of the dramatic show, and unable to contain himself, cries to his uncle, "He poisons him i' the garden for's estate. His name's Gonzago: the story is extant, and writ in choice Italian; you shall see, anon, how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife." ✓ Then, when the king rises, his nephew calls theatrically to him, "What, frightened with false fire!" but Claudius rushes away in terror and confusion, and Hamlet remains to shout in theatrical frenzy to his friend Horatio,

✓ "Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
So runs the world away.

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers,—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me,—with two Provincial roses in my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?"

✓ He seems to exult more in the success of his dramatic piece than to be impressed by the verification of the ghost's story. When he does allude to this verification, it is still in theatrical bombast and burlesque versification. Calling for music, he indulges his excitement with more rhyme. In all this he appears to be playing actor

—although he has no audience now but his confidential friend—rather than Prince of Denmark, evidently controlled by the theatrical fiend that has possession of his will and imagination. Is this the delineation of a sane mind? or the picture of an idiosyncrasy plunging its possessor into positive insanity? What madder act could Hamlet possibly perform than his last cry to the king?

It was the crazy triumph of an actor making a point; it accomplished nothing; helped nothing in the direction of his mission; it was not even playing mad; for it showed to the king his nephew's knowledge of an arranged meaning in the play; a knowledge which was not a symptom of insanity, but a light of purpose shining through the murk of his whimsical actions in such a way as might well create the fear that it would, by and by, kindle a dangerous conflagration. Its results were to put the king fully on his guard, and compel his careful action against a conspirator who was capable of showing so much approach to design in his madness.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern bring a message from the queen, but are met by Hamlet with polite mockery. Presently, when their despicable treachery to him has had time to sufficiently impress and fire his brain, he exhibits his contempt of the two spies in the most marked manner, but throughout the interview his conversation is quaint and flighty, showing that the theatrical impression is still upon his mind, though the actual

direction of his thoughts is given by the pair of courtiers. Polonius returns to urge again the queen's message, and the prince, caught in an instant by the puzzle in the old chamberlain's head over his madness, perplexes him anew by a ludicrous exhibition of his suspicions.

Left alone, Hamlet again soliloquizes in much excitement, and still in the theatrical vein which is the result of the deep effect which the play has produced in his distempered brain. On his way to the queen's chamber he sees the king at prayer; his first motion is to kill him, but, allowing his mind to dwell on the thought, that his wicked uncle's religious exercise may have, at this moment, the effect of purifying his soul of the terrible crime with which it is stained, his entangled brain goes wandering away along a line of subtile sophistry suggested by his uncle's attitude of devotion and certain religious dogmas, until the avenger is lost in the sophister, and the momentary impulse that made him draw his sword dies away. He has just had a verification of the ghost's story; he is satisfied of the king's guilt; the murderer is before him and his own drawn sword is in his hand; he now knows that no time will be more suitable for the act he has sworn to do, for he must have become aware that, with his infirmity of mind, he cannot carry into execution such careful plans as will make his uncle's guilt plain to the world; he has all the teaching of that wild warrior Northland

that tells him his father's spirit calls for the blood of his assassin, which it is his duty to shed; but in spite of all this his infirmity compels forgetfulness of everything but the fancies of the moment, and his purpose melts out of his thoughts, while his brain is filled with extravagant and unhealthy imaginings. So unhealthy and foul are these imaginative suggestions that, in a sane Hamlet of his fine intellectual perceptions, they would be most pernicious blots, showing a depraved moral nature; but, seen as the effects of his idiosyncrasy, they appear wicked things thrust upon him, not emanating from his own soul.

He is received by the queen, with Polonius hidden behind the arras. His mother commences to lecture him upon his conduct, but with his usual rapidity of reflection, he takes his cue from her and proceeds to pour forth a torrent of reproaches and accusations. In alarm she calls for help, a call which foolish Polonius echoes behind the arras, but is immediately slain by Hamlet, who cries in theatrical bombast,

“How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!”

as he thrusts his sword through the old chamberlain. Here we see how our crazy prince is capable of killing the king,—as he possibly imagines he is doing at this time,—or any one else when the fancy to do so seizes

him to the exclusion of other fancies; to this extent, no more and no less, he is capable of action. Discovering who is his victim, Hamlet dismisses him from his thoughts with a few contemptuous words, and then takes his mother fully to task upon her whole line of conduct. This he urges with great extravagance of words and excitement of manner, wrought more and more by the theme which is controlling him, until, while hurling invectives at his uncle, his excitement produces hallucination, and he beholds a vision of his father. This spectre is evidently a creature of his disease, for the queen does not see or hear the unearthly visitor, and her conclusion very naturally is that her son is mad. At the departure of the ghost she exclaims,—

“This is the very coinage of your brain :
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

Hamlet. Ecstasy !
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music : it is not madness
That I have utter'd : bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word ; which madness
Would gambol from.”

Of this denial of insanity Dr. Bucknill says : “Hamlet offers as tests of his sanity that his pulse is temperate, that his attention is under command, and his memory faithful ; tests which we are bound to pronounce about

as fallacious as could well be offered, and which could only apply to febrile delirium and mania. The pulse in mania averages about fifteen beats above that of health; that of the insane generally, including maniacs, only averages nine beats above the healthy standard; the pulse of melancholia and monomania *is not above the average*. That a maniac would gambol from reproducing in the same words any statement he had made, is true enough in the acute forms of the disease, but it is not so in numberless instances of chronic mania, nor in melancholia, or partial insanity. The dramatic representations which are in vogue in some asylums prove the power of attention and memory preserved by many patients; indeed, the possessor of the most brilliant memory we ever met with was a violent and mischievous maniac. He would quote page after page from the Greek, Latin, and French classics. The Iliad and the best plays of Molière, in particular, he seemed to have at his fingers' ends."*

The scene between Hamlet and his mother, just described, has never been surpassed in dramatic effects, power, and interest, nor in the eloquence and beauty of its language; it has, however, been called episodical, as not advancing the action of the play, but this criticism

* The Mad Folk of Shakespeare, by John C. Bucknill, M.D., F.R.S. Second edition, page 111.

certainly fails if the principal action of the play is the development of Hamlet's lunacy. At the close of the scene the prince refers to the purpose of the king to send him to England, and, with a madman's cunning, boasts that he will outwit his uncle's scheme: he cries,

"Let it work;
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar; and't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon."

This displays a spirit of braggadocio very little in accord with a reasonable mind looking forward into the thickness of coming perils,—perils of the most serious kind, as the prince's acuteness divines; but it is exactly in the manner of a crazy spirit of madness, defiant in very recklessness.

With more contemptuous words over the dead chamberlain, — words in singular disagreement with the queen's description, in the next scene, of his weeping over his victim,—he drags out the body to hide it, with a maniac's petty cunning, in some hole or corner. In the remaining scenes of this act he meets all the circumstances that come of his misdeed of killing Polonius with defiant mockery, which is either the reckless frenzy of insanity or the most exquisite acting,—and for the latter the exciting events of the day and his previous condition

of nervous hysteria would have been ill preparation. His wit is constantly flashing forth on all who are about him. He tells the king, on being questioned, where he has hidden the body, but in no terms of respect. It seems scarcely possible that the highest endowment of intellect in a sane mind could carry its possessor through these scenes, especially when we consider the emotions which would be agitating at this time the heart of a sane Hamlet.

Dragged before the king on account of the murder of an inoffensive old man beloved by the court, and the father of Ophelia, while confessing his act, yet, withal, this marvellous prince retains his moral superiority over the king and all, and pours out his contempt of the monarch, before his face and in presence of the courtiers, in biting words and brilliant flashes of wit.

The possessor of the average of moral perceptions and endowments would be so much and seriously affected by the discovery that his hasty and reckless act has slain an innocent, though perhaps foolishly offending man, who was, moreover, the father of the woman he loved, as to be rendered incapable of acting this part of cold and mocking flightiness; but it is just the condition of mind and mode of action that might be expected of one of Hamlet's brilliance of intellect and noble but nervously excitable character, when forced by disturbing circumstances out of a state of *melancholia* into an actual fever-

fit of insanity,—every faculty preternaturally heightened, his bitter wit overflowing, all tenderness and every tie of moral obligation burnt into cinder by the wild fire of his brain, judgment utterly overthrown, and all his wonderful powers unrestrained by any curb of reason, fear, custom, or law.

Hamlet, on his way to England, meets soldiers marching

“to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name;”

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and the sight fills his inflammatory brain with a host of images drawn from the consideration of what small reasons induce military ardor and enterprise. As usual, he is for the moment captured by these thoughts, that mix themselves up, as did the actors, with his mission, making a strange medley which his intellectual endowments render into a kind of eloquent coherence. The remainder of the fourth act is taken up mainly with the episode of Ophelia's madness. That this is unlike Hamlet's is not an argument that both are not actual cases of disease. Ophelia's mind is completely overturned, while Hamlet's is only so much disordered as to make him an irresponsible agent of action, though the thoughts of his teeming brain continue to flow in some approach to natural order, but ever at the suggestion of whatever circumstances engage his attention. With him control of

judgment is relaxed, and will-power lost ; nevertheless, at times his conversation is not only sufficiently orderly, but, as we have seen, intellectually brilliant. In her all is confusion : no judgment, no order, no natural sequence of thoughts. Her insanity is many stages advanced beyond his, and exhibits different phenomena.

In the first scene of the last act, Prince Hamlet and his best friend, Horatio, come to a church-yard, where they overhear two grave-diggers singing merrily as they dig. The mind of the prince, taking color as usual from his surroundings, moralizes over the skulls tossed carelessly forth by the sexton's spade. There is no trace in his conversation of his perplexing thoughts, dangerous position, or awful mission. He talks over the philosophy of life and death with the calmness of a professor of craniology. At length, unable to resist the fascination of even these rude minds, he engages in conversation with one of the diggers, who is a practical joker and a merry fellow in spite of his grave occupation ; and actually taking tone and the cue to his thoughts from this knight of the spade, the Prince of Denmark bandies words with a sexton ; but, as we are forced to acknowledge, in this case meets a wit sharper than his own for such coarse encounter.

At sight of a skull which the sexton assures him is that of Yorick, the king's jester, he falls once more to moralizing as only he can moralize, and evidently with

his whole heart and mind in this theme of the moment. His mind goes wandering away and chasing fancies on a path of imaginative suggestion, while his thoughts, fouled by church-yard airs, seem to take morbid delight in picturing the most repulsive images of mortality, of which skulls and graves are the hints which have caught and control him. But in this unhealthy occupation he is stopped by the entrance of a funeral procession, which conveys the body of poor Ophelia to its last resting-place. The corpse is laid in the grave, into which her brother Laertes leaps in a passion of grief, which, though excessive, seems legitimate enough, and bids them

“Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made
To o’ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus!”

This is cue enough for Hamlet’s madness to catch the infection, and he takes it the more readily that his heart and brain are laboring in the excitement of learning that the sweet lady he loved is dead. Hence we may look for a fit of more than ordinary violence in the direction of his usual idiosyncrasy; nor do we look in vain. He mimics the passion of Laertes in the same theatrical style of extravagant words, thus exhibiting his constant mania of losing his own direction of thought by the suggestion of an exciting circumstance.

"*Hamlet [advancing]*. What is he whose grief
 Bears such an emphasis? whose phase of sorrow
 Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
 Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
 Hamlet the Dane!"

After grappling with Laertes in a desperate struggle on Ophelia's coffin, they come out of the grave, and Hamlet, raving, cries to the brother of the lady whom his own acts have destroyed,—

"Swords! show me what thou'lt do:
 Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?
 Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?
 I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?
 To outface me with leaping in her grave?
 Be buried quick with her, and so will I:
 And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
 Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
 Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
 Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
 I'll rant as well as thou.

Queen. This is mere madness;
 And thus awhile the fit will work on him;
 Anon, as patient as the female dove,
 When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
 His silence will sit drooping.

Hamlet [although he was the aggressor].
 Hear you, sir;
 What is the reason that you use me thus?
 I loved you ever.—But it is no matter.
 Let Hercules himself do what he may,
 The cat will mew, and dog will have his day."

Hamlet's madness is so apparent in this scene that it

needs no further comment than the remark that, as always, it takes its form from the prominent circumstance, which happens to be the theatrical display by Laertes of his grief. It will be noticed that Laertes tacitly admits Hamlet's insanity, for he utters no word to him in all his aggression, except his first exclamation when that madman leaps into the grave and assaults him; the king and queen call him mad; Horatio bids him "be quiet;" and, at the end of the scene, in obedience to the king's command,—

"I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him"—

that gentleman performs the part of a madman's keeper, and leads him off. The prince had one of his worst fits, and to believe that it was counterfeited is to make him desecrate his love of Ophelia and all the best and holiest feelings of the human heart by this disgraceful scene over her dead body, at a moment, too, when the shock of her death first comes to him,—a despicable action which no right-minded man could possibly perform for the purpose of carrying on a sham, which might just as well be acted elsewhere.

In the next scene Hamlet relates to Horatio how he extricated himself from the fate planned for him by his king-uncle. His trick of changing the tenor of the king's letter so fatally for his schoolmates, a piece of cunning

very likely to pop into an intellectual madman's brain, is an act which we prefer to attribute to craziness rather than to the deliberate purpose of an unclouded mind. That the pair of courtiers may have deserved their fate is possibly true,—though we are not compelled to suppose them cognizant of the king's design; indeed, their carrying the letter to England in Hamlet's absence would indicate their ignorance of its purport;—but the act that sent them to their destruction was not princely.

To Hamlet and Horatio comes Osric, a court-butterfly; and, in the euphuistic language in fashion at the English court when this play was written, and which Shakespeare found a fit subject for his ridicule, conveys to the prince a message from the king. This is a request that, to decide a wager the king has laid, Hamlet will accept a friendly challenge to fence with Laertes. Caught with the glitter of Osric's words, Hamlet becomes an euphuist, and mimics the gay court-fly with mocking disdain; not only entering, perforce, into that mockery with a keen, quizzical spirit, but seeming to catch eagerly at the proposal of a bout with the foils, as if it suggested amusement and interest to him. His brain is ever inflammable, caught by the last sight or the last sound, always incapable of holding a purpose, although that purpose may haunt him from time to time with the delusion that it is the moving cause of his action. The poor ghost has placed his cause in very incapable hands, and the avenging

of his murder hangs on uncertain chance; it is, indeed, accomplished at last, but, by the craziness and incapacity of his agent, comes amid a general ruin that falls not alone on his murderer, but on his own son and widow.

Although Hamlet has a premonition of coming disaster, which he confides to his friend, he disregards that friend's advice, and goes on with interest, even with eagerness, to the fencing bout. In a speech, most manly if spoken by a madman in an interval of comparative freedom from his malady, but utterly mean if the speaker be a counterfeiter of madness, he begs Laertes' pardon for the misfortunes he has brought upon him, and declares that what he has done must be set down to madness. This he does clasping Laertes' hand, and professing brotherly love. Can we believe the heart of the brilliant Prince of Denmark so base as to descend into this abyss of lies? If so, all the glory and dignity of the play have departed, and no moralist can ever patch up and re-burnish the defaced and tarnished soul of this false hero.

The play of *Hamlet*, by the dishonesty of its chief personage, loses rank, and can never fail, after such conclusion has been reached, to bring with it uncomfortable and ugly thoughts, and our condemnation, not only of its hero, but of the plan of the drama, where Hamlet, as the chosen agent of Claudius' punishment, should represent virtue against vice, as Richmond does against the wicked Gloster.

✓ Hamlet and Laertes fence; and the play of fighting so acts on the impressible mind of the prince as to bring about the reality of a deadly encounter; the courtly game at the foils is changed into an angry scuffle, in which rapid and desperate blows are exchanged; the ✓ combatants close, grapple, and change weapons; struck with the same venom, both are mortally wounded. Meantime the queen has drunk from the cup prepared by the wicked king for his nephew, and cries that she is poisoned; Laertes confesses his baseness, and pro- ✓ claims the king's treachery, and Hamlet kills the king. ✓ Before dying the prince forgives Laertes, and earnestly calls on Horatio to set him right with the world,—

∫ “If thou did'st ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.”

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In his last words, at the moment of death, this unfortunate prince seems more free from the curse of the mad- ✓ ness that has embittered his life and induced the frightful tragedy that closes the play than during all the preceding ✓ scenes.

✓ So Hamlet has passed in review before us, and we must make up our verdict upon his condition. We find his mind constantly diverted from one theme to another, ✓ forgetting purpose and duty by contact with circum-

stances and other minds, entangled with every mind he meets by a strange magnetism that makes him assume its thoughts, or reflect or mock its manner of thinking. This power of absorbing the thoughts of other minds would indicate the highest order of intellect, if its possessor retained the force of his own will, purpose, and complete identity; but this is not the case with Hamlet, who yields himself and all his powers of thought to every influence that comes to him, betraying at once whatever knowledge he has gained,—the creature and never the director of circumstances. He plunges eagerly into each excitement with boyish zeal. He is like a child sent upon an errand, who chases each butterfly he sees, climbs for birds' nests, picks berries, and runs after every bright-tinted flower that catches his eye, until he has completely lost his way; nor is his wandering redeemed because between each episode he remembers the errand upon which he has been sent. The child wanders because his fancies are more active than memory or judgment. Hamlet goes astray from precisely the same reason: but in him maturity of intellect should have made judgment and memory the lords of his action, and his failures can only be set down to unsoundness of mind. When not under excitement or the magnetism of other minds, he is plunged in melancholy and contemplates suicide. Under any excitement he is easily wrought to violence, and, when the fit is on him, proceeds to unwar-

rantable excesses, as in his interviews with Ophelia and in the graveyard scene.

It has been claimed that Hamlet's conversations with Horatio and his marvellous soliloquies can be put in evidence against the charge of insanity. In every case these conversations and soliloquies reflect his subjection to some other mind or circumstance, or to compound influences. His soliloquies are often marvels of thought, and exhibit far-reachings of intellectual power; but they run brilliantly along lines of reflection that are suggested to him from without, not within, and there is often—perhaps always—a feverishness in them that is not healthy.

His mind is phenomenal for acuteness and subtilty, and still more so for the splendor of its flights of imagination, but this does not prove his rationality. On the contrary, the abandon with which he follows any line of thought suggested to him is significant of an unbalanced intellect; for when the strong curb of reason is on every thought, fancies are restrained and the lawlessness of imagination controlled between certain lines that hold in their wholesome restrictions a normal, well-balanced mind. There is no restraint on Hamlet's imagination, and its wild lawlessness awes and enchants us,—enchants by the weird fascination we feel in contemplating the exercise of unrestrained powers that dare to plunge into fathomless deeps or try to scale the heavens.

Hamlet is constantly in the condition of the subject of a mesmerist,—if there are such conditions of the sane mind as mesmerists claim. His will yields itself partially or completely to whatever crosses his path,—king, queen, Ophelia, Horatio, Polonius, courtiers, actors, even down to Osric and the grave-diggers! Yes, the skull of Yorick mesmerizes him, and night and darkness so work on his sensitive imagination that he exclaims,—

“Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on!”

↙ A graveyard sends his thoughts upon the loathsome track of the decay of mortality, and he follows Alexander's dust to the loam that stops a beer-barrel.

This, to such extent, and in a mind so full of preoccupations, is abnormal,—a growing malady that pushes him on to frivolous or to desperate acts, according to the character of the influences that magnetize him. Yet Hamlet's is not always passive subjection to the mesmerizing agent: it is subjection to influences that give direction to his mind, or that open to this most intellectual of all subjects the mind of the mesmerist, in a mysterious way,—it is a mingling of mesmerist and subject, while the individualities remain; the subject's will being paralyzed or eccentrically or fantastically diverted into a previously unconsidered

direction. He is often the subject of compound influences, and the magnetic lines that draw him cross and conflict, producing distractions and confusion.

MAD? So only can we reconcile him with himself, and give him a consistent, understandable character. Never a feigner of madness; but whenever his words indicate this, it is the cunning devil of insanity that speaks, seeking to hide its acts beneath a veil of lies. How can we believe in the failure of such a stupendous intellect as Hamlet's would be, if its keenness, activity, and subtle powers were under the direction of sound judgment? All the clumsy force of the murderer-king would fall at once before it; the truth would be proclaimed, and guilt punished. We recognize Hamlet's marvellous powers of brain, but while they amaze and dazzle us, we see their possessor going constantly astray. He has knowledge, energy, keenness, imagination, and a rare power of reading men's thoughts; but, alas! directing force of judgment is wanting. His mind is a kaleidoscope, always brilliant, but its brightness twisted into distorted forms at every turn,—no identity of shape, no constant figure. His is a mingling of opposites impossible under the rule of reason; hence we must place him in the realm of unreason, where we find an explanation of those "bad dreams" that vex him, making "Denmark a prison," the "majestical roof" of the heavens "a foul and pestilent congregation of

vapors," and terrifying his soul in its contemplation of a future life. There are nobleness and meanness; acuteness of intellect and weakness of judgment; gentle, sympathetic perception and unfeeling harshness; lofty aspirations and contemptible falsity; the highest moral principle, and taking life with a contemptuous mock,—we must reconcile these and more, if we say, not mad. No sane being can combine such contrarieties; but a madman is capable of everything from the most sublime to the most mean.

MAD? So only has the play a continuity of purpose, as exhibiting the struggle of a majestic, graceful, and most brilliant mind in the grasp of a dread disease that blights every noble faculty by the palsy of its withering touch, while the flashes of wit and genius which dazzle our sight are but signs of the death agonies of that brain, around which the fatal malady is pouring its suffocating fogs. It is a fatal overthrow of reason, not in one stunning shock, but by insidious approaches of an enemy that exerts its most powerful efforts in hours of trial and in the emergencies of life when the soul has greatest need of all its powers and the clear light of intellect. We think of Laocoon in the folds of the serpents: there is, as to this inner struggle, the silence of the statue and the same piteous appeal to our hearts. This is tragedy. What conflict without can be compared to that inward battle of a

human soul with the demon of insanity? Such an enemy has terrors to daunt the boldest. Who can look into the eyes of a madman without a shudder of sympathetic horror? The furies that gathered around unhappy Orestes, and hissed terror at him from the wild tangles of their serpent hair, were fainter horrors than the shapeless things that come upon the melancholy creature doomed to insanity.

MAD? So only is Prince Hamlet noble. If he is a sham and a cheat, debasing his soul with lies, trampling on the purest affections, sacrificing Ophelia's innocent life, let us tear from our hearts the fascination and glamour he has cast over us, and see him as he is, a cruel and ignoble plotter, who has not even the crown of success with which to hide the ugliness his unfeeling selfishness has stamped upon his brow.

The unerring intuitions of a woman's heart give to her words a broader wisdom than her judgment is capable of in Ophelia's despairing cry :

"O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh!"

